



SAFETY ALERT 01-01

17th Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
P. O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802
www.uscg.mil/d17/m/CFVS.shtml

CALL FOR A FREE DOCKSIDE EXAM

MSO Anchorage	271-6700	MSD Sitka	966-5454
MSO Valdez	835-7223	MSD Ketchikan	225-4496
MSO Juneau	463-2450	MSD Kodiak	486-5918
MSD Dutch Harbor	581-3466	MSD Kenai	283-3292

FISHING VESSEL SINKS, 4 CREW SAVED, **OFF GORE POINT, ALASKA**

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of the Coast Guard’s “Ready for Sea” safety program.

Incident: An 80 foot crabber was running south of Gore Point, Alaska in 50 knot winds and 30 foot seas when the crew noticed the stern was riding low in the water. They thought it might be water in the aft hold as they had experienced problems with the hatch in the past. The hatch was covered with crab pots so they couldn't tell if that was the problem. The dewatering pumps were quickly started but didn't appear to be gaining on the flooding. The crew contacted the Coast Guard and prepared to abandon the vessel by donning their immersion suits. By the time the Coast Guard helicopter arrived on scene, the operator determined the flooding was under control and the pumps were gaining. Although the Coast Guard helicopter offered to hoist the crew or drop dewatering pumps, the operator determined that neither was necessary. The vessel operator planned to head for shelter at Gore Point, ten miles away. Two crewmembers headed for their bunks, as they were so confident everything was okay. The Coast Guard helicopter pilot, concerned with the condition of the vessel laboring in the heavy seas, decided to land at Gore Point to await the vessel's safe arrival instead of returning to Kodiak.

Less than two hours later things changed dramatically as the vessel took on a 30 degree list and water started pouring into the galley. The operator quickly made the decision to abandon the vessel and contacted the Coast Guard by VHF radio. The crew put on their immersion suits and prepared to abandon the vessel. The helicopter was quickly airborne and arrived in time to hoist all four crewmembers from the sinking vessel.

Lessons Learned: Although the cause of the casualty remains unknown, there are “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident and several “lessons learned”.

1. Activate high water alarms before leaving port or at least once a month. Verify the alarms work before getting underway. Place the high water alarm in a water-filled bucket to test the float as well as the alarm. There were high water alarms in the engine room and the lazarette, but they hadn't been checked before this trip.
2. The aft hold hatch had not sealed properly in the past and it was their practice to pump it dry before getting underway. Repair or replace hatches when they don't seal properly.
3. If possible stow gear so that there is clear, easy access to hatches. Gear stowed on top of hatches make it impossible to check for problems.
4. Consider installing a video camera in inaccessible locations, such as the lazarette. If the high water alarm fails, the video camera will be there as backup.
5. Continually monitor the weather, particularly in the winter when weather conditions can change rapidly. If weather conditions are extreme, find a safe refuge. No fish are worth a life or the vessel.
6. The crew knew what to do in an emergency as the operator had taken a safety course several years ago. They donned their immersion suits, they called the Coast Guard for assistance, and they were able to get off the vessel without any mishaps. The primary lifesaving equipment was ready for use. The survival craft had recently been serviced and was deployed, and a crewmember grabbed the EPIRB to take it with them.
7. The vessel did not have a current CG dockside exam. These free exams, performed at the dock, help identify safety deficiencies that can lead to loss of vessels and/or their crew.